

# TALES FROM THE KINGDOM OF TUT

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Editor's Note: Palindromist James Rambo, known by the pseudonym of 'Tut' in the National Puzzlers' League, died on July 27, 1980. Word Ways readers will remember him best for his transposition poems based on well-known phrases such as 'Fools rush in where angels fear to tread' and 'Discretion is the better part of valor'. The stories below, three of which first appeared in The Enigma (July 1972, April 1974, February 1975), show that he was interested in other forms of word-play as well.

## A Stitch in Time

The Queen had had her embroidery taken to an upper terrace and was busily at her work - a strip entitled "The Triumphs of the King" which was a yard in height and, through industry and imagination, had grown in length to something more than one-hundred and forty-seven feet - when the subject himself approached waving a piece of paper.

"I'd think," he complained, "that a boarding school of the supposed quality of the one to which we've sent our son would by this time have taught him to write."

"And they've not?" asked the Queen.

The King snorted. "Not if this scrap is a sample!" He handed the Queen the offending communication.

Above the familiar subscription the words were, indeed, few and somewhat odd: 6 x airmail.

But the Queen appeared undisturbed.

"Dear," she said, "the school is discharging its duties quite well; you may be proud of the boy. Though his message is entirely clear, I'll copy off a free rendition if you like." Thereupon she wrote thoughtfully on the back of the sheet which the King impatiently snatched as she finished. In her neat script were the words:

"Quickly send to your scion manly ways and miens - princely link armor - before he tests himself without."

"Such a request is granted!" exclaimed the King. "Heartening to see the lad takes after his father. Most heartening. But what, my treasure, was your method with his little - er - time-saver?"

The Queen was careful to retire her needle before offering her explanation:

"Phonetically, the word 'airmail' suggests five common one-syllable words in two groups: air, ere and heir in the first group; mail and male in the second. With airmail as a phonetic syllabic pattern, these words may be paired in only six ways: air mail, air male, ere mail, ere male, heir mail and heir male. Taking the choice of meanings of

these six pairs along with the choice of meanings of the five words singly, we are provided with a fruitful generative vocabulary. Knowing our son's sense of rightness, he would use all pairs, but no pair twice. Or, as he more simply suggests, six times airmail. It remains only to be selective in ordering the pairs so as to yield the series of words - punctuation being inserted as needed, of course - which convey his message. Thus we find, if I may be allowed to scribble again:

\* Airmail heir male air - male heir mail - ere male ere mail. '"

"Dear, is that clear? Have you any questions?"

The King looked wholly puzzled but demanded in his firmest voice,

"Airmail? What the devil is airmail?"

### The Numbers Game

A little disarrayed at having been summoned in the small hours of the morning, the Wizard was shown into the royal bedchamber to find the King pacing ill-temperedly, a crumpled note in his hand.

"Women? Bah!" exclaimed his royal highness. "The Queen and her seven ladies-in-waiting - they've assumed some foolish name for the group since I widened the moat - have been gone from the palace at their constant card playing, I suppose, since dinner. Only now a courier has handed me this word from her, and I fail to understand it at all! I am about to bring the matter to a head which, unless you can cast some light on her meaning, may well be yours - detached!"

The Wizard bent to the parquet and retrieved the ball of paper from where the King had cast it. Smoothing the note out, he read silently, "1144488800222."

"But Sire," he cried at once, "this is completely plain! Perhaps I may be allowed to interpret freely: 'With a single game won after having been ahead in four, the Islet Octet has eaten nothing, though it should, it having got on to two o'clock.'"

"And just how do you get that from an idiotic string of numbers?" The King was plainly losing control.

"Why, Sire," soothed the Wizard, "simply by selectively transcribing a phonetic rendering: 'One won, fore for four, Ait Eight ate aught; ought to - two, too.'"

The Wizard allowed himself a small smile. "Sire, with your permission, the Queen has a most active mind."

Crossing and uncrossing his eyes rapidly, the King emitted a brisk honk. "I wish I could say the same for her future!"

"You may, Dear," said a cool voice from the doorway.

It was the Queen, and a new game had begun.

### Dressing

The Wizard was on his knees in his herb patch, loosening the soil at the roots of a promising stand of henbane. Humming, he allowed his eyes to wander to one of his chief prides, the neat section devoted to kitchen herbs, the source of one of his most profitable moonlighting enterprises - supplying the palace cook with the wizardry required for her haut cuisine. At this moment, the lilt of female voices warned him of the approach of the Queen and her ladies, by no means a welcome intrusion on such a

morning.

Rising to his feet, he brushed a few particles of earth from his raven-black robe, dusted off his hands and composed himself for the encounter. "Your Majesty! Ladies! What humble service may I offer today?"

Rolling her eyes heavenward, the Queen sighed, "The King has ordered a feast for this evening honoring a hundred of his most persistent idolaters. Cook is toasting a few oxen and things, but I always feel at this time of year that a good tomato salad is in order. Have you a magic herb of some sort to liven the dressing?"

Silently the Wizard selected a sample, and the Queen, after sniffing the offering, was delighted. She said, "Fine. I'll take enough for a hundred. A few ounces. Or pounds. Or whatever."

"Forgive me, Your Majesty, but exactly how much will you want?" The Wizard was a bit nettled.

Stung, in turn the Queen demanded, "And how could I possibly answer that? Just how?"

Somewhat wistfully the Wizard fell into a mollifying tone as he replied "Thyme weights foreknow, Ma'm!"

### Game

The Queen and the Wizard were playing at draughts when the Queen idly asked, "Have you seen the King?" I haven't been aware of him all afternoon."

The Wizard cleared his throat before replying. "I understand, Ma'am, that His Majesty is hunting for hares in the furze."

"A child's game," said the Queen, absently chewing on a fingernail.

The Wizard had almost spoken truth for the King was, at the moment, striding about deep in a rocky glade, his bow ever at the ready and his hounds and huntsmen warily at the rear. The party eventually emerged into a small clearing bounded by trees and a stone outcropping at the right. Noting a tentative movement on this invitingly flat obtrusion, the King eagerly raised his bow, bent on sending an arrow in that direction.

"Sire! Wait!" The Master of the Hunt plunged in front of the wavering shaft. "It is Her Royal Highness with the young Prince from the neighboring realm. Their happy union is to be celebrated but two days hence!"

The King, his eyes suddenly bright with pride, could see that indeed it was they. "Ah," he sighed, "the perfect pair. Ideally suited, Such a handsome couple..."

At that instant a hare broke into view from the left; but a few short bounds carried it to safety within the thick tangle of briars sheltered by the outcropping.

The Master of the Hunt, expecting at the least to be roundly cursed after this missed opportunity, was greatly relieved when the King snorted, shrugged, and observed simply,

"Close cover before striking match."